

#YALICHAT with the U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues, Cathy Russell

Cathy Russell serves as the U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues. Previously she served at the White House, coordinating the development of the Obama Administration's strategy to prevent and respond to gender-based violence globally. Join Ambassador Russell (@AmbCathyRussell) for a Twitter #YALICHAT on Wednesday, March 18th at 13:00 UTC. Additional details below.



Ambassador Russell visits girls at a school in Zambia

As young African leaders and followers of the YALI Network, you already know that the United States invests in women and girls because it's the right thing to do for gender equality and the smart thing to do for our foreign policy.

When policies and programs consider women and girls, they're more successful. They promote stronger democracies and more durable peace agreements. They increase food security and make for healthier families. They improve public service delivery. And they lead to fewer conflicts and more rapidly growing economies.

As the U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues, it's my job to work with my colleagues across the U.S. government and with leaders around the world to advance the status of women and girls worldwide. Every day I talk with government officials, world leaders, and women and girls around the world about how women have contributed to global progress and why we need to break the barriers keeping women and girls from fully participating in society.

Earlier this month, I had the privilege of presenting ten women from ten countries with the Secretary of State's [International Women of Courage Award](#). These women, including Marie Claire Tchecola from Guinea and Beatrice Epaye from the Central African Republic, have shown exceptional courage and leadership in advocating for women's rights and empowerment.

As an emergency room nurse in Guinea, Marie Claire Tchecola has been on the front lines of the fight against Ebola. When she became infected with the Ebola virus, she took precautions to protect other workers and her family from contracting the disease – and when she recovered, she went back to work. Through her leadership in the Ebola Survivors Association of Guinea, Marie Claire continues to spread awareness about the disease and fight the stigma associated with its survivors.

When Seleka rebels stormed the streets of Bangui and overtook the Central African Republic's capital, one of their first stops was the office of Beatrice Epaye, an outspoken activist who raised her voice to condemn the horrors of civil war and to call for peace, human rights, and good governance. Refusing to be intimidated, Beatrice took to the radio and met with local and international organizations, eventually becoming the president of the Preparatory Committee for the National Dialogue.

Ms. Tchecola and Ms. Epaye are proof of how women can and do transform societies with little fanfare through their everyday actions. Yet in every country – from Guinea to Germany to Guatemala – women and girls face challenges and barriers that keep them from fully participating. A family may choose to send a son, but not a daughter, to school because there's only enough money for one child's fees. A woman may be kept from launching a new business because she can't access capital. Or bias and stereotypes about women's roles in society will keep a woman from her rightful seat at the peacekeeping table or in Parliament.

It will take all of us – men and women, boys and girls – to achieve the progress we need to unleash the power of women and girls. But if every one of us takes action, we can break down these barriers and open doors for women and girls of courage.

I urge you all, both my fellow women and our male allies, to [take the #Africa4Her pledge](#) and tell us how you will invest in women and girls. Show us how you will raise, educate, protect, support, mentor, and elevate the many women and girls of courage in your life.

Join the YALICHAT on Wednesday, March 18th at:

12:00-13:00 Cape Verde Time (CVT)

13:00-14:00 UTC/GMT

14:00-15:00 West Africa Time (WAT)

15:00-16:00 Central Africa (CAT) and South Africa Standard Time (SAST)

18:00-19:00 Eastern Africa Time (EAT)

19:00-20:00 Seychelles and Mauritius (SCT/MUT)

[#YALIVotes: Join Your Community](#)

“May your choices reflect your hopes, not your fears”

« Que vos choix reflètent vos espoirs, non vos peurs. »

- Nelson Mandela



Credit: AP Images

Africa is rising and Africa is voting. In the coming months, many Africans across the continent will be heading to the polls. These elections are important not just for you and your country, but for the entire continent of Africa and across the globe. Elections are the fundamental means by which citizens connect to their government and the world – but your responsibility and opportunity doesn't stop there. As young leaders, you can show the importance of participating in elections and staying actively engaged in civic life after the polls close, to make your voice heard.



Credit: AP Images

L'Afrique est en pleine croissance et l'Afrique vote. Au cours des prochains mois, beaucoup d'Africains se rendront aux urnes. Ces élections sont importantes non seulement pour vous et votre pays, mais aussi pour tout le continent et le monde. Les élections constituent le lien fondamental entre les citoyens et leur gouvernement, d'une part, et le monde, d'autre part mais votre responsabilité ne s'arrête pas là. Vous, jeunes leaders, vous pouvez vous faire entendre en montrant combien il est important de participer aux élections et en restant activement engagés dans la vie civique, même après la fermeture des bureaux de vote.

Show your community that #YALIVotes to bring about a more prosperous, democratic and peaceful Africa. Tweet or share on Facebook what you believe is important about Africa's upcoming elections by filling in the blank: "#YALIVotes because ____."

Montrez autour de vous que la communauté YALI est prête à voter pour rendre l'Afrique plus prospère, démocratique et pacifique. Tweetez et partagez sur Facebook ce qui vous paraît important dans les prochaines élections en complétant la phrase : « #YALIVOTES parce que ____ ».

Read more about the importance of elections and democracy:

[Nigerian YALI Member Stands Up to Violence](#)

[To Get Change, Vote](#)

[Afrobarometer Tracks Opinion and Democratic Trends](#)

[#YALICHAT: Engaging Youth in the Democratic Process](#)

[Civil Society: At the Core of Democracy and Human Nature](#)

[How to Launch Women into Political Leadership](#)

[Candidate Debates Are Centerpiece of Democracy: 1 of 3](#)

[Organize a Candidate Debate: 2 of 3](#)

[#YALIVotes Tweets](#)

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#YALIVotes is a campaign of the Bureau of International Information Programs in the U.S. Department of State for the Young African Leaders Initiative Network in Africa.

[Tanzanian Plans to Inspire Youth to Vote](#)

Join Chedi on the video #YALICHAT Engaging Youth in the Democratic Process on Wednesday, February 25th at 1400 UTC.

Chedi Ngulu. Photo Courtesy: 
State Dept./Dartmouth

Chedi Ngulu has big plans for young people in Tanzania. The 2014 Mandela Washington Fellow and YALI Network member in Dar es Salaam wants to use popular music and technology to inspire the new generation of Tanzanians to participate in their country's upcoming constitutional referendum and general elections and to help build long-term and sustainable democracy and peace.

To do that, Ngulu will implement #PigaChata (formerly #AHADI), a voter education and turnout campaign. Through the campaign, he wants Tanzania's youth to sign a pledge that they will "vote responsibly in 2015" for both the referendum and elections. They can either sign the pledge in-person or online, Ngulu says.

The head of MegaMark Communications has a passion for communications, media, business and music. Already he has led several major commercial and social marketing campaigns for companies, government and international organizations and has organized major events like concerts and conferences.

#PigaChata, slang for "leave a mark," is modeled after the successful "Rock the Vote" campaign in

the United States launched in 1990 to motivate American youth to participate in the electoral process. Rock the Vote is the largest nonprofit and nonpartisan organization in the United States driving youth to the polls.

#PigaChata will target those between ages 18 and 25, focusing on four major cities: Dar es Salaam, Arusha, Mwanza and Zanzibar. It will recruit well-known and up-and-coming hip-hop artists to collaborate on a signature campaign song that promotes responsible civic engagement, with a focus on registering and voting. All recordings will be pushed for play on radio and television. College debates, town hall meetings and grass-roots engagements will expand on campaign awareness.

Digital media makes one of the most important components of this campaign. Social media — especially Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube — will be used intensely, and thanks to U.S. African Development Foundation (USADF) funding, #PigaChata is working on a voter education and information mobile app that will also feature an interactive SMS platform.

Ngulu also has plans for a series of free, public concerts in each of the target areas with artists touring local schools and hosting town forums to engage youth. “The concerts, music and art competition events will draw out people so that we can sign up large groups at once,” he says.

Ngulu notes that 65 percent of Tanzanians are under age 24, and there are over 6.6 million Tanzanians between ages 18 and 24. “This age cohort alone has the potential to determine the next president of Tanzania,” he says.

The campaign will also reach young people who are not old enough to vote, Ngulu adds. These youth “will be impacted by the messaging, allowing us to plant seeds in future voters,” he says.

A survey of youth after 2010 elections, during which voter participation was nearly half of what it was in 2005, reinforced the need for a strong outreach campaign “that both educates young Tanzanians about their voting rights and the registration process and that also inspires them to be more engaged,” according to the businessman.

He notes that the campaign will also support the goals of the national and Zanzibar-region strategies for growth and the reduction of poverty, greater citizen participation in democratic governance, and improving democratic institutions and national unity.

#YALICHAT: Engaging Youth in the Democratic Process

Voting is one of the greatest civic responsibilities of a citizen. However, many youth across Africa are unaware of the steps one needs to take to participate in the electoral process in their countries. Join two Mandela Washington Fellows, Sobel Ngom from Senegal and Chedi Ngulu from Tanzania, to learn about their initiatives to educate youth about their voting rights and the registration

process. They will discuss how they initiated their projects, mobilized volunteers and other organizations to help them, and how they used traditional and social media to spread the word.

For more about the program, read "[To Get Change, Vote](#)"

About the Program

Sobel Aziz Alfred Marie Ngom, Senegal

[Sobel Ngom](#) is the Founder and Executive Director of Social Change Factory, a citizen leadership center created in whose mission is to inform youth of their civil, economic and social responsibilities. In 2012, he designed and implemented the Voix Des jeunes (Voices of Youth), a program that provide key information regarding the voting registration and process during the 2012 elections in Senegal.

Chedi Festo Ngulu, Tanzania

[Chedi Ngulu](#) is the founder of MegaMark Communications and has led several major commercial and social marketing campaigns for companies, government, and international organizations. He plans to implement #AHADI, a voter education and registration campaign to increase youth engagement in the upcoming 2015 general elections in Tanzania.

Senegalese Group Teaches How to Vote, Have a Choice

Join Sobel on the video #YALICHAT [Engaging Youth in the Democratic Process](#) on Wednesday, February 25th at 1400 UTC.

As Dakar resident Sobel Ngom completed his high school final exams, he began to think that if more people knew how to vote, they could change their country's future.

A visit to a family friend in a village shed further insight on that thought. The visit "changed my life," Ngom says. The villagers he met "didn't care about elections. They didn't know the candidates. The democratic system was not a part of their lives."

Later, as a communications major at SupDeCo University in Dakar, Ngom set his sights on teaching people all over Senegal how to vote. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in 2012, just as Senegal's presidential election was approaching. He wanted people to make conscious, informed decisions about who their next political leader would be.

He recruited a couple of university friends to join him. With about \$3,000 in contributions from friends and family, the three-member team developed a voter education campaign that combined social media, print, television and in-person outreach strategies designed to reach as many people as possible. Through word-of-mouth, within weeks the team had grown to 25 volunteers.

Achieving Success

Ngom, a member of the YALI Network and 2014 Mandela Washington Fellow, described how his group in three months created greater awareness among the targeted audience about the voting process.

The team organized public presentations to help villagers understand the importance of voting. The presentations included a basic handout using simple language to describe the basics of democracy and voter registration.

The team worked one-on-one with older community members – most of whom had no official record of their birth or residency – to help them get proper documentation from their municipal governments allowing their registration as voters. Older people were “very supportive” of what the team was doing, Ngom says.

To reach youth, the team employed social media platforms like Facebook and You Tube, and events like concerts to encourage voter registration and democratic participation. It put an online version of the handout on its Facebook page called [Voix Des Jeunes](#) (Voices of Youth).


Ngom’s colleagues even created an online practice ballot to familiarize future voters with the process of casting a vote. Because their parents had never voted, youth, who are the majority of Internet users, did not have a family tradition of going to the polls.

“We chose not to say to people ‘guys, you have to vote,’” Ngom emphasizes. Instead, “we wanted to help them understand the process.” Team members stayed away from promoting or opposing any candidate.

Along the way, Ngom says he sought advice from an uncle and other family members. His father, a diplomat, and sister, a former United Nations development worker, helped him find out how to apply for additional funding.

Parallel to this voter education work, Ngom heads the social media department for a digital company. He also has started several projects including a summer school program for rural youth, aiming to reduce the gap in national exam results between rural and urban students. He recently started a leadership center called “Social Change Factory” to inform youth in French-speaking Africa of their civic, economic and social responsibilities.

Civil Society: At the Core of Democracy and Human Nature

Dozens of people rallied in New Mexico  in January 2015 in favor of using

renewable fuels in electric power generation. Civil society groups have helped citizens play an influential role in local, regional and national energy policies.

When individual citizens with shared interests join together to voice their concerns, democracies work better. Civil society contributions to well-functioning governments are widely recognized among those who study these issues.

South Africa's Archbishop Desmond Tutu once described the role of this social sector as "at the core of human nature. We human beings want to get together with others ... and act collectively to make our lives better."

Tutu's words were quoted in an extensive report on this topic in 2012, *Defending Civil Society*. The World Movement for Democracy published the report in its role as an organization dedicated to keeping democracies healthy and vibrant.

Though government attempts to suppress civil society activities somewhere in the world are reported frequently, *Defending Civil Society* establishes that citizen organizations have fundamental rights in international law.

The Right to Entry (Freedom of Association)

(1) International law protects the right of individuals to form, join and participate in civil society organizations, such as trade unions, associations and other types of civil society organizations (CSOs), to pursue a broad range of legal objectives.

(2) Individuals are not required to form a legal entity in order to enjoy the freedom of association.

(3) International law protects the right of individuals to form a CSO as a legal entity. Whatever system is put in place to extend a form of legal recognition must be accessible, with clear, speedy, apolitical and inexpensive procedures.

The Right to Operate Free from Unwarranted State Interference

(1) Once established, CSOs have the right to operate free from unwarranted state intrusion or interference in their affairs. International law creates a presumption against any regulation or restriction that interferes in recognized rights.

(a) Interference can only be justified where it is prescribed by law and necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order, the protection of public health or morals, or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

(b) Laws and regulations governing CSOs should be implemented and enforced in a fair, apolitical, objective, transparent and consistent manner.

(2) Civil society representatives, individually and through their organizations, are protected against unwarranted interference with their privacy.

The Right to Free Expression

(1) Civil society representatives, individually and through their organizations, enjoy the right to freedom of expression. CSOs are protected in their ability to speak critically about government law or policy, and to speak favorably about human rights and fundamental freedoms.

(2) Interference with freedom of expression can only be justified where it is provided by law and necessary for respect of the rights or reputations of others, or for the protection of national security or public order, or of public health or morals.

The Right to Communication and Cooperation

(1) Civil society representatives have the right to communicate and seek cooperation with counterparts, the business community, international organizations and governments, both within and outside their home countries. Communications may occur through any media, across any border.

The Right to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly

(1) Civil society representatives, individually and through their organizations, enjoy the right to freedom of peaceful assembly.


(2) The law should affirm a presumption in favor of holding assemblies. Those seeking to assemble should not be required to obtain permission to do so.

(a) Where advance notification is required, notification rules should not be onerous.

(b) The law should allow for spontaneous assembly, as an exception to the notification requirement, where the giving of notice is impracticable.

(3) The law should allow for simultaneous assemblies or counter-demonstrations, while recognizing the governmental responsibility to protect peaceful assemblies and participants in them.

(4) Interference with freedom of assembly can only be justified when it is in conformity with the law and necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order, the protection of public health or morals, or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

About 500 citizens participated in a  town hall meeting in Chicago on the legalization of medical marijuana, another controversial issue in which civil society organizations have wielded considerable influence.

The Right to Seek and Secure Resources

(1) Within broad parameters, CSOs have the right to seek and secure funding from legal sources, including individuals, businesses, civil society, international organizations and intergovernmental organizations, as well as local, national and foreign governments.

State Duty to Protect

(1) The state has a duty to promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the obligation to protect the rights of civil society.

(2) The state duty should also ensure that the legislative framework relating to fundamental freedoms and civil society enables their activities and fully recognizes their rights.

View [Defending Civil Society](#) in full.

#YALICHAT on Technology & Democracy

On February 10th, the YALI Network featured Chris Spence, Chief Technology Officer at the [National Democratic Institute \(NDI\)](#) in a 3-day Facebook #YALICHAT. NDI is a non-partisan organization that works to strengthen democratic institutions worldwide and encourages citizen participation, openness, and accountability in government. At NDI, Spence leads the initiatives to use technology to advance democratic governance. Questions and comments from the YALI Network centered on [the role of technology in democracy](#), [how technology can improve transparency and government accountability](#), and [using technology to empower people to become more involved in politics](#).

In advance of the #YALICHAT, Spence shared some of his experiences applying technology to democratic institutions in Africa in a blog post entitled [Using New Technologies to Strengthen Democracy](#).

Join the YALI Network to get updates on future #YALICHATs and engage with us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

The chat discussed...

Transparency:



Using social media to bridge gaps between youth and politicians:



Taking political action:



Online security:



Election monitoring:



Social media as a tool for marginalized groups:




Communities Are Critical to Effective Disease Responses

“The most important role communities can play is to rapidly report and isolate infected patients so that the sick will not continue to infect their families and communities.”

— Saran Kaba Jones

The founder of a community development organization in Liberia — Saran Kaba Jones of [FACE Africa](#) — has mobilized community health efforts in response to the 2014 outbreak of the often-fatal infectious disease Ebola in West Africa.

Saran Kaba Jones, left, leads health  education campaigns with FACE Africa in Liberia.

Credit: Keiko Hiromi

More than 18,600 cases of the disease have caused almost 7,000 deaths in the region, according to early December data from international health monitors. As the year comes to a close, signs are emerging that the outbreak is in remission.

FACE Africa and Jones' efforts have certainly made a contribution to the decline in cases noted in Liberia. In a Facebook chat with the YALI Network, Jones explained that she originally established FACE Africa five years ago to help improve access and awareness about safe water, sanitation and hygiene.

When Ebola presented itself as a more immediate crisis, Jones said FACE Africa redirected its efforts to the crisis of the moment.

“We leveraged our existing on-ground staff resources, extensive local knowledge and deep-rooted community trust to begin working on social mobilization, prevention and awareness programs, distribution of hygiene kits, and held public engagement activities to counter damaging rumor, fear and misunderstanding about the virus. While it was successful, we still need to continue our work to ensure zero new cases over a long period of time.”

With thousands of YALI Network members participating in the [December 16-18 Facebook chat](#), Jones explained the top messages her group conveyed to the communities they work in:

- 1) What is Ebola and how is it transmitted?
- 2) How to recognize the signs and symptoms of Ebola.
- 3) What measures and precautions to take to avoid exposure to the disease.
- 4) How to deal with suspected cases of Ebola.

“The most important role communities can play [in combating disease] is to rapidly report and isolate infected patients so that the sick will not continue to infect their families and communities,” Jones said.

FACE Africa is working to train about 750 volunteers in Ebola awareness and prevention procedures, an effort that has helped to expand local understanding of proper hygiene practices. That achievement should have value beyond this outbreak, Jones predicted, contributing to broader adoption of sanitation practices which can help prevent other common diseases and improve overall health.

The West African Ebola outbreak of 2014 is the largest to occur anywhere in the world, infecting more people than any other previous outbreak. Still, the experience of earlier outbreaks in other parts of Africa should prove instructional, Jones said. She points to successful efforts in recent years to control Ebola in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. Local people — working quickly, responding properly — hold the key to overcoming Ebola and other health threats.

“It is the local doctors, nurses, community health workers, burials teams, local organizations, youth associations, women’s groups, religious leaders and many volunteers, perhaps working alongside international partners, that will ultimately win this war,” Jones told the YALI Network.

The Ebola outbreak has had ripple effects in West Africa beyond the health sector: Economics, education, agriculture and transportation have also been affected. Setbacks in these other sectors must also be corrected before a full recovery can be achieved.

“It is up to us as individuals — you, me and every single one of you on this YALICHAT. We can get involved and take action. We each have what it takes to transform our continent and build healthier, more resilient communities. Not only for ourselves but for our children and our children’s children,” Jones wrote on Facebook.

Part of aiding the recovery is getting the story straight, she said. International media coverage, rumour and exaggeration have all contributed to fear and hysteria about the outbreak. In turn, this

ill-informed, frightened discourse has cast an unfavorable light on Africa in general, Jones said, and everybody has a role in setting that record straight.

“But what’s missing from the narrative are the thousands of Ebola patients that have been successfully treated and discharged from treatment centers. As Africans, we need to tell these success stories.”

The Facebook chat with Saran Kaba Jones of FACE Africa is available on Facebook:


[Questions on FACE Africa](#)

[Questions on community responses to Ebola](#)

[Questions on the effects of stigma](#)

Authoritative information on the status of the West African Ebola update is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/> and <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/ebola/situation-reports/en>.

Mobile Phone Towers: The Answer to Vaccine Availability

Solar panels at this Zimbabwe cell tower  generate excess energy to maintain a cold chain for vaccines. Photo courtesy: Energize the Chain

Vaccines are among the most effective ways of saving lives. A concerted campaign in recent years has vastly expanded the numbers of world children who receive vaccines. The Gavi Alliance estimates that vaccines have saved 6 million children who would have died from diseases that killed so many millions in centuries before.

Still, delivering vaccines to remote areas remains a persistent problem. Vaccines require what’s called the “cold chain” — a means of transport and storage of vaccine that keeps the material between 2 and 8 degrees Celsius from manufacture to administration. Without that, vaccines become useless.

Thousands of volunteers over the decades have trudged down forest paths, forded streams and found remote villages to deliver vaccines in small coolers. A group called [Energize the Chain](#) (EtC) is finding a better way.

The lightning-fast adoption of mobile phones in the developing world has led to a booming crop of the towers that bounce the signal from caller-to-caller. The EtC team figured out that each phone tower generates more electricity than it needs, enough to sustain a refrigeration unit to store vaccines.

To tap that excess electricity, EtC installed 111 tower-driven refrigeration units to maintain “cold chain” conditions for vaccines headed to remote or rural areas. EtC made use of the newly created cold chain to insure that 250,000 Zimbabwean children, regardless of where they lived, received vaccines in 2013.


The EtC mission is to “eradicate vaccine-preventable deaths worldwide by making effective vaccines as accessible as global cell phone coverage.” This method also reduces waste of vaccines and will “solve the missing link in the delivery of vaccines to the world’s poorest,” EtC pledges.

EtC plans to establish vaccine cold chains for Burundi, Lesotho, India and possibly other countries in the near future.

Community Engagement: A Powerful Tool in Combating Ebola


Guest post by Saran Kaba Jones, Founder and CEO of [FACE Africa](#)

Join Saran Kaba Jones for a Facebook #YALICHAT starting Tuesday, December 16. You can submit your questions until Thursday, December 18. Post your questions on Facebook or tweet your questions to @YALINetwork and include #YALICHAT.

FACE Africa team joins together. Photo  courtesy Keiko Hiromi.


Five years ago I began the journey that is today [FACE Africa](#). In that time, with the support of our team and the communities we work with and serve, we have been able to bring safe water to over 20,000 people in some of the most deprived areas of Liberia, with many more projects to come.

But the unprecedented Ebola outbreak in West Africa has presented a new set of challenges that has required the FACE Africa team to redirect our efforts. Ebola has had a devastating impact on the lives of people already struggling to rebuild from the effects of political instability, poverty and war. In addition to the suffering of infected individuals and their families, the disease has caused disruptions in normal daily life, from school and business closings, to disrupted trade and economic activity, rising food prices, an increase in fatalities from treatable illnesses due to the closure of non-Ebola health clinics and —most devastatingly — over 3,700 orphaned children in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, according to UNICEF.

Community works together to install a  well in rural Liberia. Photo courtesy Keiko Hiromi.

At FACE Africa, we believe that engagement is the pathway to empowerment, and when communities are empowered to take control of a situation for themselves, you see meaningful change. They may not have all the expertise, but they have the ability to learn, take charge and even put in place their own solutions. Building on our track record of community engagement and trust developed over many years, the FACE Africa team is working with local communities in Liberia to develop and implement a response strategy with the overall aim of preventing the further spread of the virus. Our team has been working hard on social mobilization and awareness — helping communities understand the outbreak and the protective measures they can take to reduce human infection and death while reducing fear and misconceptions about the virus.

Fear is a powerful emotion. It can make even the most reasoned person abandon good judgment and common sense. It is possible that the fear around Ebola stems from the difficulty in fighting it — there is neither a cure nor a vaccine. But we know for a fact that there are thousands of Ebola patients who have been successfully treated and discharged from treatment centers. As Africans, we need to tell these success stories. By telling these stories we can reduce the level of stigma that survivors have to contend with when they return to their communities. Survivors of Ebola are a beacon of hope in an otherwise shattering epidemic.

FACE Africa team joins community  leaders for discussion in Liberia. Photo courtesy Keiko Hiromi.

Let us celebrate the local everyday heroes, risking their lives to care for patients or bury the dead. We need to recognize the communities that are taking charge, especially in rural areas, and putting in place their own resolutions and protective measures. The eradication of Ebola will only happen through education, community involvement and the aggressive efforts of African and international organizations. All of those whose lives have been impacted by Ebola deserve our respect and compassion, not to be ostracized and excluded from society.

The Founder and CEO of [FACE Africa](#), Saran Kaba Jones, is currently in Liberia assisting communities in the fight against Ebola. FACE Africa is a community development organization working to build and strengthen water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure and services.

The views and opinions expressed here belong to the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the YALI Network or the U.S. government.
